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# PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION.

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THE Reform Bill which Mr. Gladstone has introduced is welcomed almost unanimously by the Liberal party, because they believe that the admission of 'capable citizens' to the franchise will add to the strength and prosperity of the country.

The Conservative party, on the contrary, oppose the Bill, mainly, I think it may be said, because they fear that the result would be to place all political power in the hands of one class, the others being silenced and excluded.

Is there any way by which we can reconcile these views,—by which we can secure for the majority the power which is their right and at the same time preserve for the minority that fair hearing to which they are justly entitled?

The solution of the problem is to be found in the adoption of Proportional Representation. This explains to a great extent the very remarkable fact that, though the Proportional Representation Society has been in existence for only a few weeks, it has already been joined by more than 170 members of Parliament, of whom more than 90 are Liberals, but representing every section of the House of Commons—with one significant exception; that, namely, which follows the lead of Mr. Parnell. It comprises prominent members of the Government and of the front Opposition bench, strong supporters of the Government, independent Conservatives, staunch Radicals, and last, not least, the great majority of both Liberal and Conservative members from Ireland. Moreover there are many other members—I need only mention Mr. Forster and Mr. Goschen—who have spoken strongly in favour of the principles animating the Society, though they have not formally joined its ranks.

What is it, then, which brings together so remarkable an assemblage of members, who would perhaps agree on no other single question of practical politics? It is because proportional representation would give us a system under which the electors as a whole, and not merely a majority, would be represented; under which the minority would always have a hearing, while the majority would be sure of their just preponderance. These advantages the present system does

not and cannot give, and I shall endeavour in the present article to show—

Firstly, that injustice in one constituency is not counteracted by corresponding inequality in another;

Secondly, that the present mode of voting does not secure a majority of representatives to the majority of voters; and

Thirdly, that there is a simple system by which it is possible to obtain a fair hearing for the minority and secure their just preponderance to the majority.

The present system of mere majority voting is, even under existing circumstances, uncertain and defective in its operation. I believe indeed its supporters are generally under the impression that, though rudely, still surely, it secures to a majority of the electors a majority of the representatives. This is, however, by no means the case, and, as already mentioned, I shall hope to prove that, while it by no means obtains for minorities that representation in the Legislature to which their numbers justly entitle them, it altogether fails to secure to majorities that preponderance to which they are justly entitled. Even, therefore, under existing circumstances, the present system is very imperfect; but these drawbacks would, if mere majority voting be generally adopted, be intensified under the new Bill, which moreover will also tend to extinguish that variety in the representation which has hitherto been considered essential to the constitution of the House of Commons.

It is of course clear that additional members will be given to our large cities. Liverpool, for instance, would be entitled to, say, eight representatives. But if Liverpool is to remain an undivided constituency returning eight members, it is of great importance that we should know how the votes are to be given.

If every elector is to have a number of votes equal to the number of members, with no form of proportional representation, then it is obvious that the slightest majority on either side would return the whole eight members. We know that in Liverpool the two great parties are very evenly balanced, and the result would be that a majority of a few hundreds, perhaps of even only a few units, would return the whole eight members, counting sixteen votes on a division in the House of Commons.

The journal published by the Electoral Reform Association of Belgium gives a striking illustration of such a case. In the 1882 elections the Liberals carried their election in the city of Ghent by a majority of 40 only. Now Ghent returns 8 members to the Chamber, out of 138. If, therefore, 21 electors had gone over to the other side, Ghent would have returned 8 Roman Catholics, counting 16 on a division, and there would have been a Roman Catholic instead of a Liberal majority in the Chamber, which would have led to a complete change of government.

Even with the present distribution of seats the system is very unsatisfactory and imperfect. In my own county of Kent we polled in the three divisions at the last election over 13,000 votes, against 16,000 given to our opponents, and yet they have all the six seats. Taking all the contested seats in the county, we polled 32,000 votes against 36,000, and yet the Conservatives carried sixteen members and we only two.

If we draw a line across England from Lincolnshire to Devonshire, there are on the south-east side 99 county seats. In many of these the Conservatives had no contest, but the majority of the seats were fought, and the Liberals polled 96,000 votes against 116,000 given to the Tories. On this basis therefore we ought to have had, say, 40 seats and the Conservatives 59. As a matter of fact, however, we only secured 15 against 84. Moreover of our 15, 5 were minority seats; so that but for the introduction of the principle of minority representation, limited though it was, we should have only had 10 seats in the whole district, while we were fairly entitled to 40.

Out of 60 members from Scotland and 28 from Wales, only 9 and 2 respectively are Conservatives.

The Roman Catholics are a very large and respectable portion of the nation; yet in the whole of England and Scotland they have never, I believe, for years past secured more than a single seat at any one time.

The case of Ireland is the most serious of all. Certainly one-third of the population is moderate, loyal, and desires to maintain the integrity of the Empire. But we are told on high authority that under this Bill, unless some system of proportional representation be adopted, the Home Rulers will secure over 90 seats out of 100, leaving only half-a-dozen to the Liberals and Conservatives together, whereas it is clear that under any just system of representation they ought to have over 30. The result of such a system would be that Ireland would be entirely misrepresented, and that we should gratuitously create serious and unnecessary difficulties for ourselves.

To adopt a system by which we should exclude from the representation of Ireland one-third of the electors, and give the whole power to two-thirds, would, under any circumstances, be unjust; but to do so when the one-third comprise those who are moderate and loyal, while the two-thirds are led by men not only opposed to the Union, but in many cases animated by a bitter and extraordinary hatred of this country, would be an act of political madness.

To tell the Liberals of Kent and Surrey that they are represented by the Liberal members for Scotch and Welsh counties is just the old and exploded argument which used to maintain that the people of Birmingham and Manchester were really represented by the Liberal members of some other borough. We are glad, no doubt, that Scotland and Wales send us such admirable colleagues; it is a consolation,

but it is not the same thing. Perhaps the one question about which our farmers in Kent care most is the subject of extraordinary tithes. Mr. Gladstone will sympathise with us, because he has so powerfully advocated the cultivation of vegetables and the growth of fruit. He has raised the question of jam to a dignity which it never before attained. But while the extraordinary tithe question remains in its present position I fear it will long be with us a case of jam every other day. But the farmers of Kent cannot expect the Liberal members from Scotland to help them as regards extraordinary tithes. It is conceivable that they do not even know what extraordinary tithes are.

It would not then be satisfactory, even if it were true, that inequalities in one district are made up for by those in another. But it is not true. Let us look for instance at the elections of 1874 and 1880. In the former, as Mr. Hayward has shown in this Review, the Conservatives had a majority of 50 over the Liberals and Home Rulers put together, while in 1880 the Liberals had a majority over the Conservatives and Home Rulers of more than 50. Of course if this change were due to a corresponding alteration in public opinion, then, however much each side of the House might regret its defeat in the one case and rejoice over its victory in the other, there would be nothing to be said as regards the system.

But what are the facts? In 1874 the Conservatives polled 1,200,000 votes against 1,400,000 given to the Liberals and Home Rulers; so that, though they were in a majority of 50 in the House of Commons, they actually polled 200,000 votes in the country less than their opponents. Perhaps I shall be told that this was due to the small boroughs. But the experience of 1880 proves that this was not so, or only to a certain extent. In 1880 Liberals and Home Rulers together polled 1,880,000 votes against 1,420,000 given to Conservative candidates. The proportions ought then to have been 370 Liberal and Home Rule members to 280 Conservatives, whereas they really were 414 to 236. In 1874 therefore the Liberals and Home Rulers had 56 members too few in relation to their total poll, while on the contrary in 1880 they secured 43 too many. The difference between the two elections was therefore enormous—namely, 99 out of a total of 650.

The present system, then, renders the result of a general election uncertain, and to a large extent a matter of chance; it leads to violent fluctuations in the balance of political power, and consequently in the policy of the country. In fact the present system may be good or may be bad, but it is not representation; and the question is whether we wish for representation in fact or in name only.

The adoption of proportional representation moreover would raise and purify the whole tone of political contests. What do we see now when there is a contest in any of our great northern cities? The majority of the Irish electors, instructed by the honourable

member for Cork, withhold their votes. They do not consider the prosperity of the Empire as a whole, but what they regard as the advantage of Ireland. I do not blame them. They do not seem to me wise: yet I can sympathise with their devotion, mistaken though I think it is, to their own island. Then some deputy in the confidence of the Home Rule party has more or less clandestine and secret interviews with the candidates or their leading supporters. We hear the most opposite accounts of what has occurred. Each side accuses the other of truckling to the Home Rule party and selfishly imperilling the integrity of the Empire. It must be very unsatisfactory to all concerned; and it would be far better if Liverpool had eight votes, and the Home Rulers there are sufficiently strong to return a Home Rule member, than that they should extract doubtful pledges from reluctant candidates.

Moreover the geographical differentiation of political views tends to become more and more accentuated, and might, I think, constitute a real danger. At present Scotland is overpoweringly Liberal, while the south-eastern counties of England, with scarcely an exception, are represented by honourable members sitting on the opposite side of the House. It is but a small consolation to the unrepresented Liberals of Kent to be told that the Conservatives of Scotland share the same grievance, and are as badly off as they are.

But further than this, it will be a great misfortune to the country if one part becomes and continues overwhelmingly Liberal and another Conservative—if their distinctive differences become questions of geography and locality rather than of opinion. The different portions of our Empire are not yet so closely fused that we can afford to despise this danger. In my own county we look on the shires as distinctly lower and less civilised than we are.

America might have been spared a terrible civil war if the principle of proportional representation had been recognised in the composition of the House of Representatives. This was forcibly pointed out in the report unanimously adopted by the Committee of the United States Senate appointed in 1869 to consider the question of representative reform.

The absence (they say) of any provision for the representation of minorities in the States of the South when rebellion was plotted, and when open steps were taken to break the Union, was unfortunate, for it would have held the Union men of those States together, and have given them voice in the electoral colleges and in Congress. But they were fearfully overborne by the plurality rule of elections, and were swept forward by the course of events into impotency or open hostility to our cause. By that rule they were shut out of the electoral colleges. Dispersed, unorganised, unrepresented, without due voice and power, they could interpose no effectual resistance to secession and to civil war.

We shall ourselves make the same mistake and run the same risk of civil war if we neglect all warning, and allow the loyal minority in

Ireland to be altogether silenced and excluded. This is in my humble judgment perhaps the greatest danger with which England is now threatened.

The reasons hitherto given against proportional representation are based on an entire misapprehension of its effect. For instance, the Liberal Conference at Leeds resolved almost unanimously

That, in the opinion of this Conference, the attempt to secure the representation of minorities by special legislative enactments is a violation of the principle of popular representative government.

This was of course a severe and unexpected blow to the friends of proportional representation. But they did not despair. It is obvious indeed from the very terms of the resolution that it is based on an entire misapprehension. One of the ablest supporters of mere majority election, in advocating the resolution, expressed himself as follows :—

What they desired was to remove the anomaly whereby the minorities in the counties and boroughs really ruled the majority. By a notorious artifice the House of Lords' territorial majority adopted the minority clause for the avowed purpose of acting as a brake upon the democracy. Any attempt to place the minority in possession of the power of the majority was treason to the principle of popular representation.

But who has proposed anything of the kind? The argument clearly shows that the speaker entirely misunderstood the object and effect of the system which we advocate. Another leading opponent of proportional representation once characterised it as 'a pernicious restriction on free voting,' when in fact the very reverse is the case. It would increase the power of free voting; what it would diminish would be the power of wirepullers.

But then it is often said that the minority system, as adopted, say, in Liverpool, reduces that great city to the level of a town returning a single member. Well, but that is only because parties are evenly balanced there. If one-third of the voters are Conservatives, why should they not have one-third of the members? Why should two-thirds of the constituency monopolise the whole of the representatives? Birmingham and Glasgow, where the Liberals are strong enough to do so, return, we know, three Liberal members. We shall give Liverpool, say, eight members because it has 63,000 electors, of whom perhaps 30,000 are Liberals, 30,000 Conservatives, 2,000 Irish Home Rulers, and 1,000 without distinctive political opinions; and I do not understand how any one can really wish that these 3,000 should practically return all the members. We know that generally they join the Conservatives, and the result would be that 30,000 Liberals would be unrepresented. But if it were not for the 30,000 Liberals, Liverpool would have had only four members. It comes, therefore, to this: that because there are 30,000 Liberals in Liverpool you give the Conservatives twice as many members as they would

otherwise have had. If we are told that any proportional system is objectionable because it might reduce Liverpool to a single vote, then I ask, How far are you going to carry this principle? In Lancashire at the last general election the Conservatives polled 38,000 votes, the Liberals 36,000, and the members are four to four. This seems as it should be. The votes were nearly equal, and the members are equal. But shall we be told that Lancashire is unrepresented? Would any one propose that the 36,000 Conservative electors should have returned the whole eight members, and the 34,000 Liberals none at all? Yet this is what we are told is the just system in great cities such as Liverpool and Manchester.

It is possible that her Majesty's Government may propose to divide our cities into wards or districts, and there is much to be said in favour of single seats. I will not now discuss that system, but while no doubt it tends to the protection of minorities it does so very imperfectly; the districts themselves, moreover, soon become very unequal and require continual rectification, giving a great temptation to 'gerrymandering.' Indeed, the Committee of the United States Senate which reported on this subject states that 'there is hardly a State in our Union in which the Congressional districts are not gerrymandered in the interests of party.'

Single districts (they continue) will almost always be unfairly made. They must be formed in the interest of party, and to secure an unjust measure of power to their authors, and it may be expected that each successive district apportionment will be more unjust than its predecessor. Parties will retaliate upon each other whenever possible. The disfranchisement suffered through one decade by a political party may be repeated upon it in the next with increased severity; but if it shall happen to have power in the Legislature when the new apportionment for the State is to be made, it will take signal vengeance for its wrongs and in its turn indulge in the luxury of persecution.

Nor, again, would a division into wards by any means secure a majority of members to a majority of electors. Suppose, for instance, that a constituency of 18,000 electors, 10,000 Liberal and 8,000 Conservatives, is divided into three wards, each containing 6,000 electors. It is quite possible that in one ward you might have 5,000 Liberals with 1,000 Conservatives, and in each of the others about 2,500 Liberals and 3,500 Conservatives, the result of which would be that the latter, though in a minority, would return two members out of three.

By the constitution of 1842 Geneva was divided into six colleges, each returning one member. The result was that the Liberal electors, being massed in two wards, only returned two members, and the Conservatives, though in a minority, secured six; and the extreme dissatisfaction thus created greatly contributed to the violent revolution of 1846. In fact, though it sounds a paradox, a majority of electors in each constituency is by no means the same thing as a majority in all the constituencies.

I do not deny that the three-cornered constituencies are somewhat

awkward and cumbersome. The system there adopted is, I think, not the most convenient application of the principle. But it must be admitted that they have given a fair and just result, though perhaps in a rather troublesome way. But shall we abandon the principle of just representation because it gives us some inconvenience? Is it not worth a little trouble? For my part I cannot abandon the substance of justice to the shadow of simplicity; to do so would be to sacrifice the end to the means.

There are, I know, some who, while admitting the justice of our principle, think there is no simple method by which it can be brought into practical operation. But this is not so: on the contrary, there are several. The cumulative vote and the limited vote are already in operation. Mr. Westlake has recently described the Free List system. On the whole, however, the system known as the single transferable vote has perhaps the largest number of advocates. So far from not being simple, it is even simpler than the mere majority plan of voting would be in large constituencies.

Suppose, to take an example, some borough returning three members and containing 20,000 electors, of whom 12,000 were Liberals and 8,000 Conservatives, and that Mr. Gladstone and a generally acceptable, but less known, Liberal candidate were opposed by two Conservatives. If every elector had one vote, but untransferable, it is clear that the two Conservatives might be elected. Every Liberal would naturally wish to vote for Mr. Gladstone, so that the second Liberal candidate might receive very few votes.

This result, however, might be avoided if the vote were transferable; that is to say, if the elector were allowed to indicate on his paper the order of his preference. In that case we may assume that the Liberal elector would mark his voting papers as follows:—

The Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone . . .	1
Second Liberal Candidate . . .	2
First Conservative Candidate . . .	
Second Conservative Candidate . . .	

Voting papers, then, marked as above would be counted for Mr. Gladstone until such a number of votes as would secure his election had been recorded for him. After that the papers so marked would be counted for the second Liberal candidate. The result of course would be that the two Liberals and one Conservative must come in. If the Conservatives divided their votes equally, the numbers would be—

The Rt. Hon. Gladstone . . .	6,001
The second Liberal candidate . . .	5,999
The first Conservative , . .	4,001
The second , , .	3,999

Let us take one other case, that of a borough returning six members. Let us suppose the electors to be 72,000, of whom 42,000 were Liberal and 30,000 Conservative. The Liberals would probably start four candidates, and the Conservatives three. In this case it is clear that under any circumstances a candidate receiving 10,286 votes must be elected, because  $10,286 \times 6 = 61,716$ , leaving only 10,284 for any other candidate or candidates. Each Liberal elector would place on his voting paper against the names of the Liberal candidates 1, 2, 3, and 4, in the order of his preference.

First Liberal Candidate <sup>1</sup>	.	.	.	.	1
First Conservative Candidate	.	.	.	.	
Second Liberal Candidate	.	.	.	.	3
Third Liberal Candidate	.	.	.	.	2
Second Conservative Candidate	.	.	.	.	
Fourth Liberal Candidate	.	.	.	.	4
Third Conservative Candidate	.	.	.	.	

The returning officer would count each vote for the candidate against whose name the number 1 was placed, until a sufficient number were recorded for him, after which they would be transferred to the second, and so on. It is of course obvious that four Liberals and two Conservatives would be elected.

Under this system all necessity for interference or dictation by any caucus or agent is entirely obviated. The elector can freely vote for whom he pleases, without any fear that his vote will be thrown away. The most eminent and trusted leaders would be sure of election, and we should not see Cabinet ministers in difficulties about a seat.<sup>2</sup>

So far as the elector is concerned nothing could be more simple.

No doubt, to provide for cases where the number of candidates is more in excess of the number of seats, some further instructions to the returning officer are needed, about which, however, there is no difficulty.

The quota which would elect a member would be the number next greater than that found by dividing the number of votes given by one more than the number of vacancies. Suppose, for instance, an election at which 24,000 votes were given for three candidates. 24,000 divided by  $3 + 1$  is 6,000, and the quota will accordingly

<sup>1</sup> The names would be entered alphabetically.

<sup>2</sup> Of course it would be possible to leave each elector in possession of several votes. This could perfectly be done, but it would obviously give him no more power, and would therefore introduce an unnecessary complexity.

be 6,001. It is clear that any candidate receiving 6,001 votes must be elected, because  $6001 \times 3 = 18003$ , leaving only 5,997 votes for any other candidate or candidates.

Every candidate whose voting papers equal or exceed the quota would be elected. When any candidate had secured the quota, the remaining voting papers would be transferred to the next candidate (if any) first designated on them, and counted for him after and in addition to the voting papers originally given for him ; and any candidate whose voting papers are by this means raised to the quota would be elected.

The objection still remains that a party putting forward too many candidates would run the risk of defeat. This difficulty, we know, exists at present. Under the single transferable vote it might be obviated by enacting further, that if after all the surplus votes of the successful candidates have been thus transferred any vacancy still remains unfilled, then the name of that candidate who has received the smallest number of votes would be cancelled, and the votes given to him would be transferred to, and counted for, the first of the remaining candidates designated thereon ; and this would be repeated until there were left no more than the number of candidates to be elected.

These suggestions are mainly taken from the Bill introduced in 1872 by Mr. Morrison, with some modifications suggested by Mr. Droop and Mr. Parker Smith : they may be said to be Mr. Hare's celebrated scheme applied within the constituency. I suggest them not as President of the Proportional Representation Society, but merely in my individual capacity.

The Proportional Representation Society has indeed hitherto confined itself to the adoption as the basis of its constitution of the following resolution : ' That without prejudging how far the principle may be subsequently carried out, it is indispensable, as a first step towards securing the true representation of the electors, that whenever a constituency returns more than two members some form of proportional representation should be adopted.'

I regret that this question has been so often argued as if the great or even the main reason for it was to admit representatives of small minorities. Indeed, it is often said that any such system would merely admit members who are in favour of crotchetts. It is no doubt difficult to say what is really a crotchet. When Mr. Grote brought up the question of the Ballot was that a crotchet? When Mr. Villiers brought forward Free Trade was that a crotchet? Many and many of the opinions now generally entertained were regarded as crotchetts when things first made their appearance. Everything must have a beginning, and almost everything, even proportional representation itself, has been at first regarded as a fad and a crotchet.

But in my humble judgment the representation of small sections

is a very small part of the question. Whether small minorities represent the temporary delusion of the moment, or a great, although as yet unrecognised truth, the House of Commons is scarcely the proper sphere for their exertions. What I am much more anxious about is that the great parties in the State should be adequately represented in the different districts of the Empire.

Those who object to the fair representation of minorities do not seem to realise the difference between an executive government and a representative assembly. A government of course must be as far as possible homogeneous and of one mind, but a representative assembly should be a mirror of the nation. The exclusion of the minority, which is a necessity in the one case, would be tyranny and injustice in the other. We are told by those who have not studied the question that we wish to give to minorities the power which rightly belongs to majorities. The very reverse is the case. An untrammelled system of proportional representation is, as Mr. Mill has truly said, 'not only the most complete application of the democratic principle that has yet been made, but its greatest safeguard.' I trust that under the new Bill we may secure for the new voters, as well as those already on the register, the right not merely of recording a vote, but of doing so in such a manner as may give to it all just and reasonable effect. If this be done, the Parliament of 1880 will have given effect to a great principle, and we shall have for the first time a really representative assembly. I venture to recommend the system of proportional representation to the House of Commons and to the country because it would give its just political weight to the vote of every elector; it would insure the return of leading and trusted statesmen, as well as of those who are most favourably known in their own districts; it would elevate and purify the whole tone of electoral contests; would obtain for the minority a fair hearing; and last, not least, because it is the only mode of securing for the majority that preponderance to which of course they are justly entitled.

The following Members of Parliament have already joined the Proportional Representation Society:—

C. T. Dyke Acland
Henry G. Allen
R. L. Allman
Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett
John E. F. Aylmer
Arthur Jas. Balfour
Thomas C. Baring

Col. Barne
The Earl of Bective
Michael Biddulph
Rowland P. Blennerhassett
Thomas William Boord
Charles Bradlaugh
Henry A. Brassey

J. Brinton	Right Hon. Edward Gibson
Hon. St. John Brodrick	Sir A. Gordon
Alexander Brogden	Daniel Grant
M. Brooks	William Grantham
Sir H. Hervey Bruce	T. Greer
James R. Bulwer	G. B. Gregory
Francis Wm. Buxton	Albert H. G. Grey
James A. Campbell	Montague John Guest
William C. Cartwright	Robert Thornhagh Gurdon
Lord E. Cecil	Lord G. Hamilton
Sir Thomas Chambers, M.P.	Mitchell Henry
W. L. Christie	The Hon. Sidney Herbert
Edward Clarke	J. M. Maxwell Heron
Arthur Cohen	Lord A. Hill
Sir E. Colebrooke	Sir H. T. Holland
Eugene Collins	Lieut.-Col. D. Milne Home
Thomas Collins	William H. Houldsworth
Colonel Colthurst	E. Stafford Howard
James Porter Corry	William Lawies Jackson
Alderman Cotton	Sir J. J. Jenkins
George Courtauld	Hubert E. H. Jerningham
Leonard Henry Courtney	Coleridge J. Kennard
Joseph Cowen	Colonel Kennard
Hon. H. F. Cowper	Sir John Kennaway
Ralph Creyke	Edward R. King-Harman
Viscount Crichton	Colonel Kingscote
James Cropper	Dr. Kinnear
C. Dalrymple	F. Winn Knight
David Davies	Sir Rainald Knightley
James Dickson	Samuel Laing
Thomas A. Dickson	Hon. F. W. Lambton
Hon. John Charles Dundas	Sir J. Clarke Lawrence
Viscount Ebrington	Thomas Lea
Henry Edwards	Sir E. A. H. Lechmere
Lord Elcho	Hon. G. Leigh
Hon. A. D. Elliott	Sir Baldwin Leighton
George Errington	Stanley Leighton
T. W. Evans	Lord H. Lennox
Wm. Ewart	Lord Lewisham
Archibald Orr Ewing	Sir Robert Loyd Lindsay
Rt. Hon. Henry Fawcett	Morgan Lloyd
William Findlater	Robert Loder
Sir W. H. B. Ffolkes	Rt. Hon. J. Lowther
Viscount Folkestone	Hon. W. Lowther
R. N. Fowler (Lord Mayor)	J. W. Lowther
D. F. Gabbett	Sir John Lubbock

Sir Andrew Lusk	Pandeli Ralli
Sir W. McArthur	Sir John Ramsden
Sir Thos. McClure	James Rankin
James Carlile M'Coan	William Rathbone
Sir J. McGarel-Hogg	Sir E. J. Reed
David MacIver	Sir Matthew W. Ridley
Colonel Makins	Chas. Campbell Ross
R. B. Martin	J. Round
T. W. Master	Lord Arthur Russell
Charles Henry Meldon	Thomas Salt
Sir Charles Henry Mills	Bernhard Samuelson
Sir F. G. Milner	Chas. Seeley
F. Monckton	William Shaw
Samuel Morley, M P.	Henry B. Sheridan
Arthur Moore	Sir J. G. T. Sinclair
J. Mulholland	Rt. Hon. Wm. H. Smith
P. H. Muntz	P. J. Smyth
E. Noel	Marquis of Stafford
J. S. North	C. H. Strutt
Charles Morgan Norwood	Henry Villiers Stuart
Colonel O'Beirne	Charles Beilby Stuart-Wortley
R. H. Paget	Christopher Sykes
Robert William C. Patrick	John Gilbert Talbot
Arthur Pease	John Pennington Thomasson
Sir Henry Peek	W. E. Murray Tomlinson
E. L. Pemberton	W. T. M. Torrens
John Pender	Colonel Tottenham
Frederick Pennington	Sir Richard Wallace
Earl Percy	Sir S. H. Waterlow
Lord Algernon Percy	Sir E. Watkin
Rt. Hon. Sir Lyon Playfair	Benjamin Whitworth
Rt. Hon. David R. Plunket	E. W. Brydges Willyams
Hon. W. Henry B. Portman	Chas. H. Wilson
G. E. Price	Henry De Worms
John Henry Puleston	R. J. Yorke

JOHN LUBBOCK.

## II.

## A TEST ELECTION.

AMONG the assertions which do duty as arguments against the adoption of proportional representation, none is more plausible, or is more frequently used, than that which declares that the inevitable complication of the system must be a fatal bar to its use in popular elections. Being anxious to test the real value of this contention, I recently made an experiment, the result of which may, I think, be of interest to readers of this Review, and which certainly goes some way to prove that the argument referred to is about as conclusive as most others put forward by the advocates of pure majority representation. It occurred to me that if it could be shown that the system of proportional voting might be easily understood and made use of by children under fourteen years of age, and if the process of counting the votes recorded could be successfully and rapidly conducted by persons of ordinary intelligence, unaided by previous practice or mechanical appliances, a great step would have been made towards proving that the plan might be attempted on a large scale with a fair hope of success. I admit, at the outset, that the average intelligence of children in the upper standards of a good elementary school is probably higher than that of a large number of voters at the present time. Still, inasmuch as the scholars of to-day must be the voters of to-morrow, the comparison cannot be said to be unfair. The following is a brief account of the experiment I made:—By the kind permission of the Rev. William Sinclair, of St. Stephen's, Westminster, I was permitted to conduct a test election in the elementary school attached to his church. I selected seven candidates whose names were likely to be familiar to the children. The following is the order in which they were placed upon the voting paper:—King Charles I., Queen Elizabeth, King Henry VIII., Mary Queen of Scots, Oliver Cromwell, the Duke of Wellington, and William the Conqueror. The electors numbered 184, of whom 131 were boys, and 53 girls.

Three members were to be elected. It was plainly necessary to

supply a certain amount of information to take the place of common knowledge. The work of newspaper articles, political agencies, and current conversation had to be taken into account. In order, therefore, to put the children upon a level with the ordinary voter, Mr. Sinclair in a few words explained to them the following facts :—

1. That they were supposed to be voting for members of Parliament.
2. That each voter had only one vote, which, however, might be transferred according to the numbers marked upon the voting papers.
3. That there were two parties, Liberal and Conservative. The boys were to be Liberals, with the following candidates, Henry VIII., Oliver Cromwell, the Duke of Wellington, and William the Conqueror. The girls were to be Conservatives, and their candidates were to be Charles I., Elizabeth, and Mary Queen of Scots.
4. Anybody might vote for one of the other party if he or she very much wished it.

As a supplement to the verbal explanation, a placard to the following effect was posted in the room :—

*Instructions to Voters.*

Each voter has *one* vote.

That vote will be given first to the candidate against whose name you put 1.

If that candidate has enough votes to secure his election without your vote, it will be given to the candidate against whose name you put 2.

If the candidate against whose name you put 2 has enough votes without your vote, it will be given to the candidate against whose name you put 3.

And so on.

It is not necessary to put numbers against more names than you wish.

This form of instruction, for which I am indebted to a friend, appears to me an almost ideally concise and complete formula for the purpose. The voting was conducted by Mr. Blennerhasset, M.P., and myself, first in the boys' schoolroom, then in that of the girls. There were two polling stations, and the votes were recorded with perfect order and in a very short time.

At first the boys' votes were received at one polling station only ; about halfway through the process a second was added. The operation took about thirty-five minutes. The fifty-three girls voted in twelve minutes. There seemed no hesitation nor difficulty on the part of any of the voters. No questions were asked, and no help was given. The children belonged to the three upper standards, and varied in age from ten to fourteen years.

For the sake of perfect clearness I here reproduce four specimens of the actual voting papers, as filled up in various ways :—

*Liberal Vote showing 3 Transfers.*

King Charles I.	.	.	.	
Queen Elizabeth	.	.	.	
King Henry VIII.	.	.	.	
Mary Queen of Scots	.	.	.	
Oliver Cromwell	.	.	2	
The Duke of Wellington	.	.	1	
William the Conqueror	.	.	3	

*Conservative Vote with 7 Transfers.*

King Charles I.	.	.	.	5
Queen Elizabeth	.	.	.	1
King Henry VIII.	.	.	.	6
Mary Queen of Scots	.	.	.	7
Oliver Cromwell	.	.	.	2
The Duke of Wellington	.	.	.	3
William the Conqueror	.	.	.	4

*Liberal Vote showing Plumper.*

King Charles I.	.	.	.	
Queen Elizabeth	.	.	.	
King Henry VIII.	.	.	.	
Mary Queen of Scots	.	.	.	
Oliver Cromwell	.	.	.	
The Duke of Wellington	.	.	1	
William the Conqueror	.	.	.	

*Conservative Vote showing Cross-Transfers.*

King Charles I.	.	.	.	1
Queen Elizabeth	.	.	.	3
King Henry VIII.	.	.	.	
Mary Queen of Scots	.	.	.	
Oliver Cromwell	.	.	.	
The Duke of Wellington	.	.	.	2
William the Conqueror	.	.	.	

The next process was the examination and counting of the votes. This was done by Mr. Bompas, Q.C., and myself, the results being recorded by Mr. White, secretary to the Proportional Representation Society.

Two methods of counting were adopted—the first that suggested by Mr. Bompas; the second, I believe, by Mr. Parker Smith. Mr. Bompas' plan is as follows:—The votes are kept in their registered order as received from the polling stations, and the first votes of each candidate are then sorted and placed in separate heaps or files. This done, and the spoiled votes rejected, the quota is calculated, and any candidate who has already more first votes than the quota is declared elected. The exact number of votes required is then deducted from the file of the successful candidates, the lowest registered numbers being first removed. The surplus votes are then distributed according to the preferences marked upon them. When these votes are exhausted the candidate lowest on the list is declared 'not elected,' and his votes are in turn distributed among any candidates still requiring them. This process of elimination is carried on until all the vacancies have been filled. Mr. Parker Smith's plan of counting differs from that just explained merely in this one particular, that no attention is paid to the registered numbers, but the votes forming the quota of an elected candidate are deducted

merely in the order in which they happen to have been collected after the papers have been mixed and sorted. It is contended that the first plan has some advantages in case of a scrutiny being necessary, though probably by a very simple method the second plan might be made to afford the same facilities. This, however, is a question of detail.

As a matter of fact we counted our votes in both ways. The first counting gave the following results. First votes—Charles the First, 32; Elizabeth, 16; Henry the Eighth, 6; Mary Queen of Scots, 1; Oliver Cromwell, 15; the Duke of Wellington, 112; and William the Conqueror, 0; making a total of 182. Two votes were rejected, the names of the candidates having been written upon them as well as the numbers. All the other papers were clearly and correctly filled up. One or two votes were plumpers. Several of the girls had given a second vote to a boys' candidate—Henry the Eighth and the Duke both receiving support in this way. One or two boys had also gone outside party lines to vote for Charles the First. One girl had numbered her vote up to seven, but nearly all the other voters had been contented with three or four transfers.

The quota was now calculated according to the rule, dividing the number of good votes by the number of seats plus one, and taking the next integer above the quotient obtained. Thus  $182 \div 4 = 45 + 1 = 46$ .<sup>1</sup> Forty-six was thus the quota required to insure election. The Duke having more than the required amount was declared elected; and the forty-six votes received by him bearing the lowest registered numbers were removed. His remaining votes were then distributed according to the second preferences marked on them.

On the second counting William the Conqueror came to the front, receiving no less than twenty-six votes. Mary Queen of Scots still having only one vote was then declared 'not elected,' and her vote was transferred to Charles the First. Henry the Eighth having only fifteen was the next to go, and his votes were in turn transferred. Queen Elizabeth now went out of the competition, and Oliver Cromwell having obtained the quota and been declared elected, the struggle lay between William the Conqueror and Charles the First. The latter, a Conservative candidate, was evidently most

<sup>1</sup> This calculation looks complicated. It is not so in fact. The quota is simply the number which, if obtained by any single candidate, will leave a remainder which, however divided, will not admit more additional members than there are vacancies. A simple example will show this. Suppose there are 12,000 voters and three seats. Apply the rule given above:  $12000 \div 4 = 3000 + 1 = 3001$ . Brown obtains 3,001 votes; Smith, Jones, and Robinson, the remaining three candidates, have 8,999 votes to divide between them. There are only vacancies for two of them, and it will be seen that only two of them can get the quota. For it is impossible to divide 8,999 into three equal parts, each part to be equal to or more than the quota given, namely 3,001. Thus  $8999 \div 3 = 2999$ . It is true that Smith and Jones may get more than 3,001, but then Robinson must get less; and accordingly it is true to say that a candidate who gets 3,001 votes must be elected. Q. E. D.

popular, and almost all the second votes of his party were given to him, the result being his final election by forty-seven votes, or exactly one more than the quota, his opponent failing with thirty-three.

It will thus be seen that the two Liberal candidates, the Duke and Oliver Cromwell, were elected ; the minority, by sticking to their candidates and voting solid, succeeded, as they were entitled to succeed, in returning one member. A second counting was made, according to Mr. Parker Smith's directions. It is not necessary to follow it in detail. The same candidates were elected, and on the whole it seemed a somewhat more expeditious process than the other. In neither case was there the slightest difficulty in counting and apportioning the votes. In fact, I may say that the whole experiment succeeded perfectly. I do not profess to attach much value to it as far as the counting of the votes is concerned. How far this process will present any difficulties when the number of votes is very great can only be decided by a trial on a much larger scale. It is intended shortly to make such a trial with 20,000 votes.

But one point of the first importance I do claim to have established, namely, that the idea of proportional representation and the method of recording transfer votes may be easily understood by children in an elementary school. The instruction given to our voters was conveyed in a few sentences.

If the plan be tried throughout the country, there are a hundred sources from which information of the same kind will be forthcoming. I entirely refuse therefore to believe that proportional representation can with any show of reason be rejected on the ground of its being too complicated for the electorate. The apologists for our existing plan of misrepresentation must fall back upon other arguments not yet made public for the defence of the inequitable system to which they are pledged.

H. O. ARNOLD-FORSTER.



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